



DISCARD

THE PRACTICAL
DECORATION OF FURNITURE
VOLUME THREE

THE PRACTICAL DECORATION OF FURNITURE

By H. P. SHAPLAND, A.R.I.B.A.

Already Published

VOLUME ONE. VENEERING, INLAY & MARQUETERIE
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THE PRACTICAL DECORATION OF FURNITURE

VOLUME THREE

APPLIED METALWORK, COVERING WITH LEATHER
AND TEXTILES, LACQUERING AND MISCELLANEOUS
DECORATION

By

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INTRODUCTORY

THESE volumes, in which the author illustrates and describes ornamental detail applied to cabinet work, have been prepared to complete a series dealing exhaustively with methods employed by craftsmen in making household furniture. *Practical Cabinet Making*, *Practical Upholstering* and *Practical Polishing* have already appeared. *The Practical Decoration of Furniture*, as its title implies, is concerned with the various forms of embellishment which have been employed to enrich cabinet work in Europe and America by carvers, marqueterie cutters, metal workers, turners, gilders, and other highly skilled people. The documents, consisting of photographic reproductions and numerous illustrations in the text, are classified in such a manner as to enable the reader to study any particular technique in which he may be interested in its simplest, intermediate and most elaborate forms. Hybrid pieces, depending for their effect on a number of different forms of enrichment in combination, have as far as possible been excluded.

The student can hardly fail to be impressed by the wealth and variety of detail at the disposal of the wood worker. Not only may furniture be inlaid but inlaid in fifty different ways; carving ranges from mere scratchings on the surface of a panel to beautifully wrought figures in full relief; a table may be treated with a simple coat of paint or be overlaid with ivory, tortoiseshell, silver or gold.

This is not the place to attempt a detailed analysis of ornament, but certain broad principles may be briefly indicated. There is a point at which elaboration defeats its own object. The well-known phrase of Anatole France, "Je vous dirai que l'excès est toujours un mal," is of particular application in the decoration of furniture; reticence in the scale and colour of ornamental detail should be carefully observed. No decoration of any kind should be of sufficient weight and importance to distract attention from the main lines and proportions of the furniture to which it is applied.

The examples illustrated have been photographed in national and private collections, and the author desires to express his indebtedness to the Directors of the following museums for permission to publish photographs of pieces

INTRODUCTORY

entrusted to their charge : The Victoria and Albert Museum, London ; the Museum of Art and Industry, Vienna ; the Wallace Collection, London ; the Schlossmuseum, Berlin ; the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris ; Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg ; the Bavarian National Museum, Munich ; Nordiska Museet, Stockholm ; Grand Trianon, Versailles ; The Louvre, Paris ; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York ; and the Palace of Fontainebleau, Paris.

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APPLIED METALWORK

ONE of the reasons why the furniture made during the past century lacks the interest and character of that of earlier periods is because cabinet makers have learned how to hide its construction. Practically all modern cabinets, sideboards, wardrobes and bookcases are fitted with doors, but the locks and hinges are kept out of sight, and by hiding them thus features which might be of great decorative value are lost. There is an early cupboard preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Plate I, which illustrates the decorative effect obtainable by the use of the simplest form of metalwork. It is a plain oak piece which is alleged to have belonged to the last Abbot of Whalley in Lancashire and dates from the fourteenth century. Without the smith's work the cupboard lacks interest other than that which attaches to it historically, but with the addition of the iron hinges it becomes a piece of furniture of considerable decorative value. The doors are formed of wide boards which are not framed in any way. There is a theory that the metalwork served to prevent the warping which would inevitably take place, but experience would have taught the futility of this expedient. It is more probable that the smith who was commissioned to make the hinges wrought them out of sheer love of manipulating the ductile material, for while the design in general gives an impression of balance, there is great freedom and liveliness in the details of the scroll work.

The fifteenth-century Flemish cupboard, Plate IV, takes the decoration of furniture by means of applied metalwork a little further. The nail heads are wrought as simple rosettes, the hinges and lockplates are not only treated with scrolls, but pierced, and the handles are much more elaborate than the plain rings of the earlier English piece, though not so comfortable to hold. The carved details of this chest introduce a competing interest, but apart from this the metalwork does not possess the individuality and character of the simpler type.

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The enormous strength of early, iron-bound chests suggests that they served as the safe does in modern times for the protection of valuables, and the fact that they were fitted with heavy and ingeniously contrived locks is further evidence of this. Their construction was suited to a period when domestic dwellings of any importance were surrounded by battle-mented walls and deep moats.

The succession of small scrolls which covers the front of the thirteenth-century chest in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Plate II (below), is an example of a feature, first introduced for utilitarian purposes, which has blossomed into decoration. The Westphalian chest in the Schloss-museum in Berlin, Plate II (above), has its front and lid almost entirely covered with thick strips of iron, and a decorative effect is obtained by the use of hundreds of rivets ; the binding pieces at the angles are of curious pattern, and their curved lines introduce an element of contrast into the design. Two other chests, one dating from the fourteenth, and the other from the fifteenth, century, are illustrated on Plate III. In each of these strength is evidently the main consideration. The chest on Plate III (above) is in the National Museum at Nuremberg. It is of oak, and the timber of which it is made is held together by means of a series of vertical and horizontal iron bands, the ends of which terminate alternately in conventional renderings of thistle leaves and flowers. It is fitted with a richly wrought puzzle lock surrounded by seven pierced rosettes and the iron bands are thickly studded with round-headed rivets. In the later chests, such as the eighteenth-century pieces which are illustrated on Plates V and VI, no such appearance of impregnable security is attained by the application of metal mounts. The iron, instead of being flat and of considerable thickness, is beaten to give it a certain amount of relief, the tendency of this repoussé work being to give the thin metal an appearance of strength which it does not in fact possess. In the earlier chests the iron mounts did support and strengthen the woodwork, but in the later examples the metalwork has the appearance of being applied to the surface of the wood, the tradition of the iron-bound chest surviving when there was no longer such imperative need for security. In the Swedish chest, Plate VI (above), the metalwork is gilded

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and used in a purely decorative way, and it presents a very marked contrast to the thirteenth-century example on Plate II. Very different in character is the camphor-wood chest, Plate VI (below), with pierced and chased brass mounts dating from the seventeenth century and probably made in the Dutch East Indies. But it was not only to strengthen boxes or chests that metalwork was applied. The decoration of an oak cupboard, Plate VII, consists of six horizontal wrought-iron hinges. The design is so arranged that the lines of these hinges extend right across the front of the cupboard. This is an unusual but satisfactory piece, the metalwork really bespeaking the function which it has to perform.

Very decorative also is the metalwork of the wall cupboard evidently made to fill a recess, Plate VIII. This is a fifteenth-century piece from Lüneberg, and was photographed in the Museum in Berlin. The hinges and handles are elaborately pierced, but this example is chosen for illustration on account of the ingenious metalwork which supports the fall-front when in an horizontal position. The twisted iron rods which terminate in rosettes at their upper ends slide on the plain rods attached to the framing of the sides. When the fall-front is lowered the twisted iron rods drop downward and outward, and remain stationary when they attain an angle of about forty-five degrees, forming a rigid support. In more modern furniture the metalwork used for holding a fall-front in position when horizontal is hidden, but in this instance it is applied to the face of the work, and forms part of the decoration.

There can be no doubt that furniture makers fell in love with applied metal as a method of enriching their work. The Spanish cabinet, Plate IX, is a sixteenth-century piece, the falling front of a walnut cabinet. It is ornamented with pierced ironwork, but this is no longer confined to the lock plate and escutcheons, but extends over the surface of the work. In many such instances the effect of the pierced metal was heightened by backing it with some coloured textile material.

During the florid period of French furniture—Louis-Quatorze, Louis-Quinze, Louis-Seize and the Empire—wood was subordinate to the metalwork of the *ciseleurs*. Ormolu mounts tended little by little to cover and

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ornament the whole structure. Although this furniture was French, England in all probability possesses examples as fine as France herself, as she profited more than any other part of the world by the sales of furniture which followed the Revolution, the nobilities, in their destitution, being eager to dispose of such pieces as escaped the destructive activities of the *sans culottes*.

The bronze ornaments and mouldings of such pieces were frequently gilded. In the Empire style they were flat gilt, a process which was, it appears, discovered by Gouthiere.

By far the best gilding, which was practised by these early workers in the decoration of metals, was done by a process called fire or mercurial gilding. A gold amalgam was made by dissolving the metal in mercury. The paste was evenly applied to the cleaned surface and then heated in a muffle to expel the mercury. A substantial deposit of gold could thus be imparted which could be increased at will, and the firing had also the effect of alloying the gold with the metal upon which it was placed. After suitable finishing such deposits might well last a lifetime. Flat gilding appears to have been effected by matting the surface prior to gilding. The dead or matt effect may be obtained by severe acid dipping or by the mechanical method of sandblasting, and each of these methods is practised to-day.

It is interesting to note that this mixture of materials, wood and metal, led towards the end of the Empire period to the utilisation of all kinds of substitutes ; and a way was devised of replacing metal reliefs by ornaments made of moulded and lacquered pasteboard. Percier and Fontaine exclaimed satirically that “ plaster takes the place of marble, paper plays at being painting, pasteboard mimics the labours of the graving tool, glass takes the place of precious stones, and varnish simulates porphyry.”

Brass mouldings were used to some extent during the popularity of the Empire style in England, but they never had the vogue, nor did ormolu mounts reach the perfection attained in France.

Plates X, XI, XII and XVII illustrate the ornamentation of furniture by decorative metalwork at the culminating-point of French furniture design. These pieces are all in the Wallace Collection in London. Plate X is a small

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bureau and cabinet with mounts of gilt bronze, cast and chased, and is ascribed to Riesener and Gouthiere. It is a late Louis-Seize piece. The upright secretaire, Plate XI, has plaques, mounts, and ornamentation of ormolu, by Gouthiere. Stamped on the back of this piece is the cypher of Queen Marie Antoinette and the royal crown, encircled by the words "Garde-meuble de la Reine." Possibly the best example of the length to which the French cabinet makers went with their use of decorative metalwork is provided by the commode, Plate XII, which is literally covered with ornaments of bronze cast, chased and gilt. This is signed by Caffieri and is in the earlier Louis-Quinze (rocaille) style. Plate XVII is a typical example of Boulle work. This maker was famous for the use of tortoiseshell and brass or white metal for his elaborate inlays, but his furniture also depended on the gilded bronze mounts which he employed. The example of his work in the Wallace Collection is of ebony with marqueterie of metal on tortoiseshell. In this typical Louis-Quatorze piece liberal use is made of metal mouldings. Another fine Boulle cabinet in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris is illustrated in the section devoted to inlay and marqueterie, Plate XXXII, Vol. I. In such work the general composition, colour, and technical qualities are so perfect that it is contended by many experts that it represents the acme of perfection in cabinet making. The revival of classicism in France which followed Napoleon's victories in Europe set a fashion which spread all over the Continent. Plate XV illustrates a very elaborate specimen of Empire work, and Plates XIII and XIV, simpler examples now in the Germanisches National Museum in Nuremberg, are pieces in the same style. Plate XIII is an example of what is called a "giraffe" piano of mahogany with gilded metal mounts. This and the toilet table, Plate XIV, were probably both made in Vienna at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Plate XVI illustrates another method of decorating furniture by means of metal. This is a cabinet with a glazed door protected by a pierced and chased grill of brass. It came originally from the neighbourhood of Brunswick, and was made about 1720.

LACQUERING

IN spite of the zealous guarding of the secrets of the process of lacquering furniture as carried on in the Far East, definite information has reached Western Europe from three different sources which in their main outlines, and in many of the details, corroborate each other. The best-known account, and the one most frequently quoted, is that of a corresponding member of the French Academy of Sciences, a Jesuit missionary named Father D'Incarville, who sent home his memoir from China about 1740. For the next detailed account of the process Europeans had to wait for more than a hundred years. Then, at the beginning of the year 1882, Mr. John J. Quin, a British Consul domiciled in Tokio, wrote an exhaustive paper on the subject ; the original may be consulted in British consular reports. A year or two after this Dr. J. J. Rein, a professor at the Bonn University, was sent to Japan to study the industries of the country on behalf of the German Government, and the results of his investigations were published in 1889 in a book entitled *Industries of Japan*, an English translation of which may be found in most important libraries.

It is proposed, having indicated the best sources of information, to give the briefest possible outline of the process. The raw material is obtained from lacquer trees ; the sap, which is collected by tapping, is first of all exposed to the sun in shallow vessels in order to eliminate the water which exudes with it. The process of evaporation is hastened by the addition of a further small percentage of clean water and by stirring it from time to time. The raw material is of a cream colour. Before use it is treated with vermilion, black, and other colours, and it is most carefully strained to eliminate dust and sediment as far as is humanly possible. The process consists of the application of many coats of lacquer, drying after each application in a damp press and rubbing down with various substances to obtain an absolutely smooth surface. Between the first application and the last rubbing down it is said that there are as many as thirty or thirty-five different processes, and this for the groundwork alone, before ornamenting in gold and colour. Each of the accounts mentioned above lays the greatest possible stress on the drying of the lacquer, which can only be effected in a damp atmosphere. D'Incarville in his memoir, for instance, says, " At Peking where the air

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is extremely dry it is necessary, in order to dry the varnish, to put it in a humid press surrounded by matting which they sprinkle with fresh water. If it is an article which is so situated that it cannot be moved, they are obliged to hang wet cloths about it." Quin also states that the articles are set in damp presses. These are airtight and made of rough unplaned planks which are thoroughly wetted with water before the articles are put in to dry. Unless hardened in a damp, closed atmosphere the lacquer will not dry. This method of drying is undoubtedly a very important point, and one very little understood in Western countries. Varnishes, as we know them in Europe, are dried in a warm, dry room, while these Oriental lacquers are dried in a wet, cold atmosphere.

As far as chemical investigation has gone the reason for this would appear to lie in the fact that the drying process does not consist in the evaporation of a solvent as with ordinary varnishes, but that it is due to chemical oxidation which occurs in the lacquer itself, hardening it in course of time. This oxidation is brought about by the action of a ferment of the kind known as an enzyme. The enzyme contained in lacquer requires a damp atmosphere in order to work to the best advantage, and it is through this curious chemical action that the lacquer becomes hard. It was surfaces such as these built up with extraordinary care and skill that the Chinese and Japanese artists then proceeded to decorate. Lacquer may be incised, carved, inlaid, or painted, and there is no method of enriching furniture in which such splendid decorative effects can be obtained. In surface, texture, colour, and ornament a fine piece of lacquer is an incomparable achievement of craftsmanship. During the many recurring periods when furniture in the Chinese manner has been fashionable, European craftsmen have endeavoured to imitate the lacquer work of the East, but as the Western craftsmen lacked both definite knowledge and inherited skill the lacquer work which they have done, although some of it was quite admirable, is wanting in the vigour and spirit of the Oriental pieces. It is evident that the decorators are working in a technique with which they are not fully acquainted, and when the Eastern and Western work is placed side by side it is obvious that the Japanese or Chinese painter has an unconscious deftness and unerring precision,

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whereas the Westerner is feeling his way in an unaccustomed medium. Much European lacquer was the work of amateurs, dating from the time when painting and japanning of furniture was a fashionable accomplishment of young ladies.

For an example of the perfect balance and beauty of Chinese ornament we may take the sweetmeat box on Plate XXV, where, although there is an intricate wealth of detail, the sense of composition throughout the whole design is preserved and the fine vigorous lines of the article are unhampered by concessions made to ornament.

On Plate XXVI we have a French craftsman's idea of the application of Chinese ornament to furniture, and the only point of criticism which would occur regarding a piece like this is that its shape and general design are hardly suited to the type of ornament selected for its enrichment. The hard, harsh line of the drawer that divides the lacquer panel, the ornate handles and escutcheon plates that are applied without any reference to the decoration ; these details would mar the piece in the eyes of an exacting critic, nevertheless the actual decoration in imitation of Chinese work is well conceived and admirably carried out.

On Plate XXIX a Dutch satinwood secretaire is enriched with panels of Japanese lacquer. The result is extremely decorative, and a rich and agreeable effect is obtained. A table-top of South German origin lacquered and decorated in the Chinese manner is shown on Plate XXVII. These various examples of Oriental and European lacquer emphasise the importance of carefully studying the original Chinese or Japanese work before copying is attempted. In the German table-top much of the character of Chinese decoration is lost, and there is an effect of confusion and crudity if we judge it by the standard of Chinese craftsmen.

APPLIED TEXTILES

LUXURIOUS upholstered furniture in which there are complicated arrangements of springs, horsehair stuffing, and down cushions is a comparatively recent introduction, and every well-furnished dwelling at the present time contains numerous examples of upholstered work entirely covered with textiles. But prior to the general use of this kind of upholstery, which is the main contribution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the history of furniture, there were periods when textiles or leather were used in a purely decorative manner. Chests and coffer were entirely covered with leather, needlework, or rich materials such as velvet. In the case of leather, when the material was plain, an ornamental effect was obtained by the decorative use of thousands of nail heads by means of which the material was applied to the wood, Plates XXXI and XXXII. In other cases the leather itself was elaborately tooled, subjected to a hardening process and applied to the surface of the work. Embroiderers were responsible for gros-point and petit-point panels used for the covering of small boxes, coffer, screens and chairs. Very beautiful petit-point panels were also used to ornament the pole-screens of the eighteenth century in England. There is a large piece of work covered with embroidery preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Plate XXXVI, which is probably of Dutch manufacture. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries leather-covered screens became fashionable, painted in a variety of ways with figure subjects, or, in the eighteenth century, with Chinese motifs evidently inspired by screens of Oriental lacquer. Panels of needlework actually framed up in furniture are comparatively rare, but there is an interesting example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, a late eighteenth-century cabinet in green lacquer, the inside of which is decorated with panels of embroidery, Plate XXXV. The most notable examples of furniture in which the decorative effect is obtained by the use of textiles are the great beds of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which were entirely covered, even to the mouldings and carved detail. Red damask and dark green *galon* are the materials employed to cover the four-poster illustrated on Plate XXXVII. There are many such beds preserved in the State apartments at Hampton Court.

APPLIED TEXTILES

The material selected for covering furniture in this way was generally a velvet with a fine, brilliant pile somewhat similar in appearance to modern velveteen, although other fabrics were used such as brocades, damasks and fustian. Plain velvet was the most popular, and owing to the difficulty of covering complicated angles of the mouldings and ornaments it was necessary to cut this material on the cross to obtain a clean, even surface free from wrinkles or fullness. To many of these old beds the textile still adheres with great tenacity, and this has given rise to the theory that some specially prepared solution, or some secret process which has been lost sight of, was employed, but it is more probable that the adhesive was nothing more extraordinary than good flour paste, which is the preparation used to-day by upholsterers when lining cabinets with silk or other material. The method of applying the paste was as follows : The moulding or projection was covered with a plentiful supply of paste, on this a layer of fine tissue would be fixed, after this a second layer of paste would be given, and on this the covering material would be laid. In the case of heavy fabrics the paste was applied to both the wood and the material without the insertion of the tissue. The covering of mouldings and carved ornaments necessitated very skilful workmanship, and great pains were taken to avoid the creation of any fullness in the material. The cutting of the material on the cross would to some extent obviate the danger of wrinkles on convex surfaces, and is one of the reasons why plain velvets were more in favour than figured ones. The adhesive properties of paste made of good fine flour and water are well known, and old recipes for such paste state that the flour should never be used new and should be well kneaded.

During the fine period of French furniture manufacture Beauvais and Aubusson tapestry was specially woven for the seats and backs of chairs and settees, and in these the tapestry constitutes in a very real sensé the decoration of the pieces.

MISCELLANEOUS

IN connection with the furniture designed for the State apartments of a palace, the reception rooms of a public building, and the galleries of great houses it is perhaps misleading to speak of decoration, for the sole aim and end for which such pieces are produced is decorative effect ; they are not utilitarian in the generally accepted sense of the word. Into this category fall such things as the toilet tables and mirrors at Knole, covered entirely with silver elaborately wrought, chased and embossed : the ivory-covered furniture at Buckingham Palace and Ham House, and those luxury pieces in the construction of which cabinet makers, carvers, metal workers and jewellers have united in producing elaborate masterpieces, employing all manner of precious materials. They are mentioned in passing, although the decoration of furniture as treated here is regarded as the process of beautifying objects of use, rather than the creation of objects which are purely decorative in their aim and intention.

Miss Jourdain, in her book on English Furniture of the Early Renaissance, refers to the full inventory of the furniture of the royal palaces sold by the Council of State in 1649. It includes inlaid marble tables upon gilt frames, rock crystal chandeliers, "a silver table and frame all laid over with silver," china screens, gilt and silver painted furniture. Reference is also made in the same book to a gentleman who was in Antwerp in 1651 and was commissioned by a friend to buy an ebony cabinet, but recommended her instead a tortoiseshell cabinet mounted with silver or brass of which "the best choice is at Antwerp." An elaborate cabinet with a front entirely covered with tortoiseshell is illustrated on Plate XLIV. This is seventeenth-century Flemish work and is preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Tortoiseshell, which is to be applied to furniture, should be moistened in warm vinegar or acetic acid before being laid, as this treatment softens it and removes a tendency to buckle. One surface of the shell is sometimes coloured with bright pigment mixed with varnish, and when this mixture is dry the shell is laid with the coloured side underneath. On occasion gold leaf is put between the ground and the shell. These methods enhance the beauty of the tortoiseshell, the gold leaf in particular producing a brilliant effect through the transparent material.

MISCELLANEOUS

Plate XLI is an illustration of a coffer known as a cypress chest, and is reproduced by permission of Mr. R. Manderson of Barnstaple. The ornament on the front of such chests is incised and the shallow incisions are filled with a paste or mastic which sets very hard, the material being in some cases black and in others red. They are of Italian origin, and the ornamental detail is generally Byzantine in character.

Very rich effects were obtained in the decoration of furniture by means of *gesso*. It is associated with the beautiful marriage coffers made during the Renaissance in Italy. The method of producing this form of ornament was very similar to that employed so extensively in mural decoration. The surface of the wood was covered with a coat of whitening or fine *gesso* as a ground, and on this background fleurs-de-lis, rosettes, conventional crowns and other motifs are modelled and stamped with small patterns in slight relief impressed on the surface of the *gesso* while still soft. The work was then painted or gilded and the whole covered with varnish. The extreme minuteness of some of the *gesso* work in mediæval wall decoration and woodwork was remarkable. Not only large surfaces but even intricate mouldings were covered with elaborate, tiny *gesso* patterns of great delicacy, and the effect of these broken surfaces, which were subsequently painted and gilded, was very beautiful. The *gesso* coffer with arabesques, illustrated on Plate XLII, is a piece of Florentine work made towards the end of the fifteenth century.

We now turn to a form of decoration of an entirely different kind. During the eighteenth century in England a vogue arose for large bookcases with hinged and glazed doors. The glazing bars in such pieces were arranged in a variety of beautiful patterns, the most usual being the thirteen-pane door. These glazing bars with their flowing and intersecting lines and curves really formed the decoration of such pieces. The one illustrated on Plate XLIII was photographed when in the possession of the late Lord Leverhulme.

Reference has been made in a former volume to furniture of formal architectural character. Large chests and even small pieces were conceived as the façades of Renaissance buildings, complete in every detail, base, plinth, surbase, columns, entablature, pediment, each intermediate moulding in its

MISCELLANEOUS

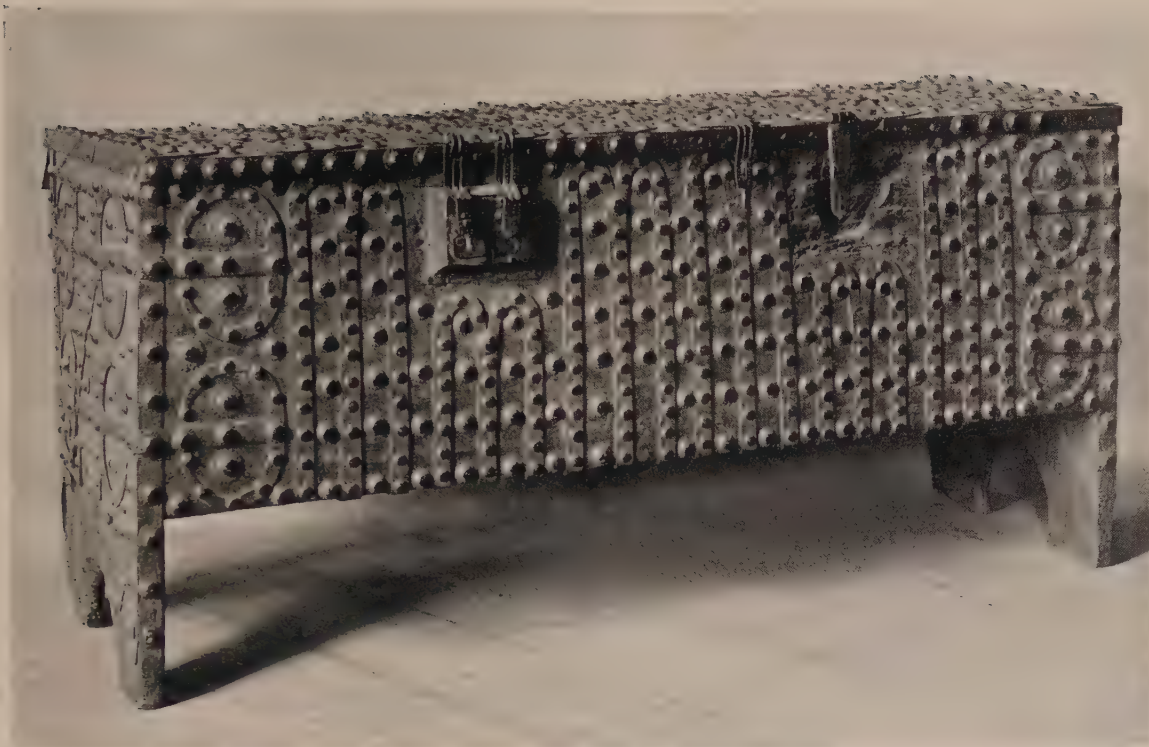
right place, and all the recognised architectural features, rustication, fluting, fenestration and delicately carved capitals, were included. In more elaborate pieces niches would be filled with minutely carved figures, and the cabinet or chest made to look as much as possible like a scale model for the façade of an elaborate building. Two such pieces are illustrated, a writing-desk on Plate XLIV and a large cabinet now in the Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, on Plate XLV.

Plate XLVI and XLVII are examples of State cabinets of ebony inlaid with panels of *pietra dura*. Numbers of such pieces were made in Northern Italy and in Augsburg in the early half of the seventeenth century. *Pietra dura* is an inlay of hard pebbles, agate, lapis lazuli and other stones. Such inlays were used extensively in the making of sumptuous furniture during the early period of the Renaissance. Ceramic decorations also were pressed into service at a later date. Panels of painted Sèvres porcelain were occasionally used in Louis-Seize furniture. There is an example preserved in the Wallace Museum in London, Plate XLVIII, and the brothers Adam employed circular or oval Wedgwood plaques with figures by Flaxman, which they included as decorative features in the mantelpieces and other woodwork designed by them. They were also responsible for introducing into Great Britain from Italy a type of relief ornamentation known as composition. The material of which it is formed is pressed into moulds and applied in a plastic state to the surface of the wood. When dry it becomes exceedingly hard, and for all practical purposes is as durable as the wood to which it was applied. This relief decoration is still used by furniture makers more especially for work which is subsequently to be painted.

PLATES



OAK CUPBOARD WITH IRON HINGES. FOURTEENTH CENTURY. ENGLISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



CHEST WITH HEAVY IRON MOUNTS. THIRTEENTH CENTURY. WESTPHALIAN.
Schlossmuseum, Berlin.



OAK CHEST WITH WROUGHT-IRON MOUNTS. THIRTEENTH CENTURY. FRENCH.
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.



CHEST WITH IRON MOUNTS AND PUZZLE LOCK. 1500. WESTPHALIAN.
Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg.



CHEST WITH IRON MOUNTS. FOURTEENTH CENTURY. GERMAN.
Bavarian National Museum, Munich.



CUPBOARD WITH HINGES AND CLAMPS OF WROUGHT IRON, FIFTEENTH CENTURY. FLEMISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



CHEST WITH HAMMERED IRON MOUNTS. 1716. WESTPHALIAN.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



PAINTED CHEST WITH HAMMERED AND PIERCED IRON MOUNTS. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. BAVARIAN.
Bavarian National Museum, Munich.



CHEST WITH GILDED METAL MOUNTS. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. SWEDISH.
Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.



CAMPHOR-WOOD CHEST WITH PIERCED AND CHASED BRASS MOUNTS. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.
PROBABLY MADE IN THE DUTCH EAST INDIES. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



CUPBOARD WITH WROUGHT-IRON LOCKS AND DECORATIVE HINGES. SIXTEENTH CENTURY.
WESTPHALIAN. *Schlossmuseum, Berlin.*



CUPBOARD (MADE FOR A RECESS) WITH PIERCED IRON MOUNTS. FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
GERMAN. Schlossmuseum, Berlin.



WALNUT CABINET ORNAMENTED WITH PIERCED IRON PLATES. SIXTEENTH CENTURY. SPANISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



BUREAU WITH MOUNTS OF GILT BRONZE, CAST AND CHASED. PERIOD OF LOUIS XVI.
FRENCH. *Wallace Collection, London.*



SECRETAIRE WITH PLAQUES AND MOUNTS IN ORMOLU. PERIOD OF LOUIS XVI.
FRENCH. *Wallace Collection, London.*



COMMODE WITH ORNAMENTS OF BRONZE, CAST, CHASED AND GILT. ROCAILLE OR EARLY LOUIS-QUINZE STYLE. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. FRENCH.
Wallace Collection, London.



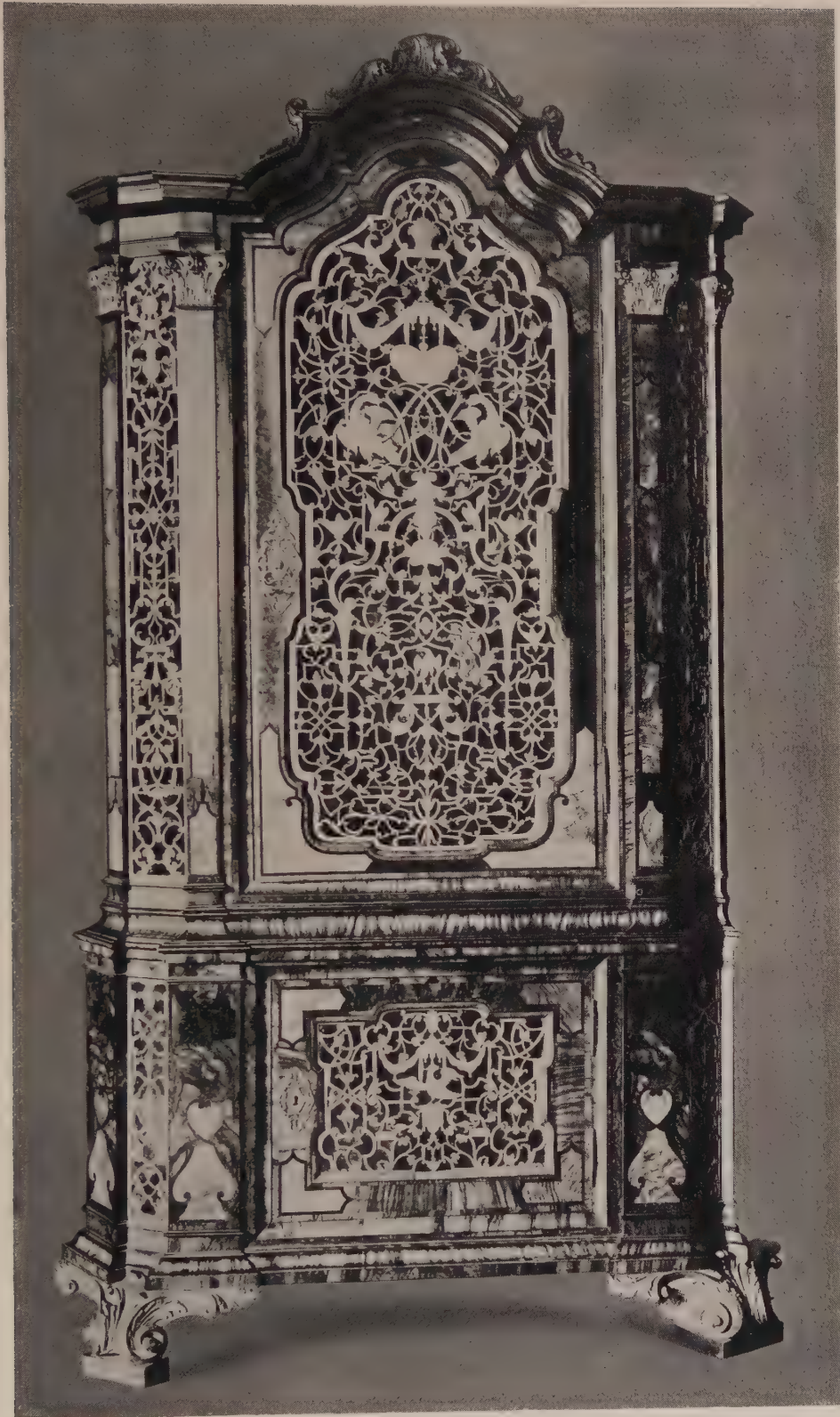
MAHOGANY TOILET-TABLE WITH MOUNTS OF GILDED BRONZE. EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY. VIENNESE.
Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg.



MAHOGANY PIANO (GIRAFFE PIANO) WITH GILDED BRONZE MOUNTS. EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY.
VIENNESE. *Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg.*



COMMODE WITH MOULDINGS AND ORNAMENTS OF GILT BRONZE. EMPIRE PERIOD. FRENCH.
Grand Trianon, Versailles.



CABINET WITH GLAZING PROTECTED BY PIERCED AND CHASED BRASS GRILLES.
EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. GERMAN *Schlossmuseum, Berlin.*



EBONY ARMOIRE WITH RELIEFS OF GILDED BRONZE BY ANDRÉ CHARLES BOULLE. 1642-1732. FRENCH.
Wallace Collection, London.



BUREAU (END VIEW) WITH CAST, CHASED AND GILDED BRONZE MOUNTS. PERIOD OF LOUIS-QUINZE. FRENCH.
Louvre, Paris.



CABINET WITH LACQUER DECORATION. JAPANESE. *Wallace Collection, London*



LACQUERED CABINET WITH DECORATION IN FLAT GOLD, SILVER AND INLAID SHELL ON BLACK GROUND. TWELFTH CENTURY.
JAPANESE. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



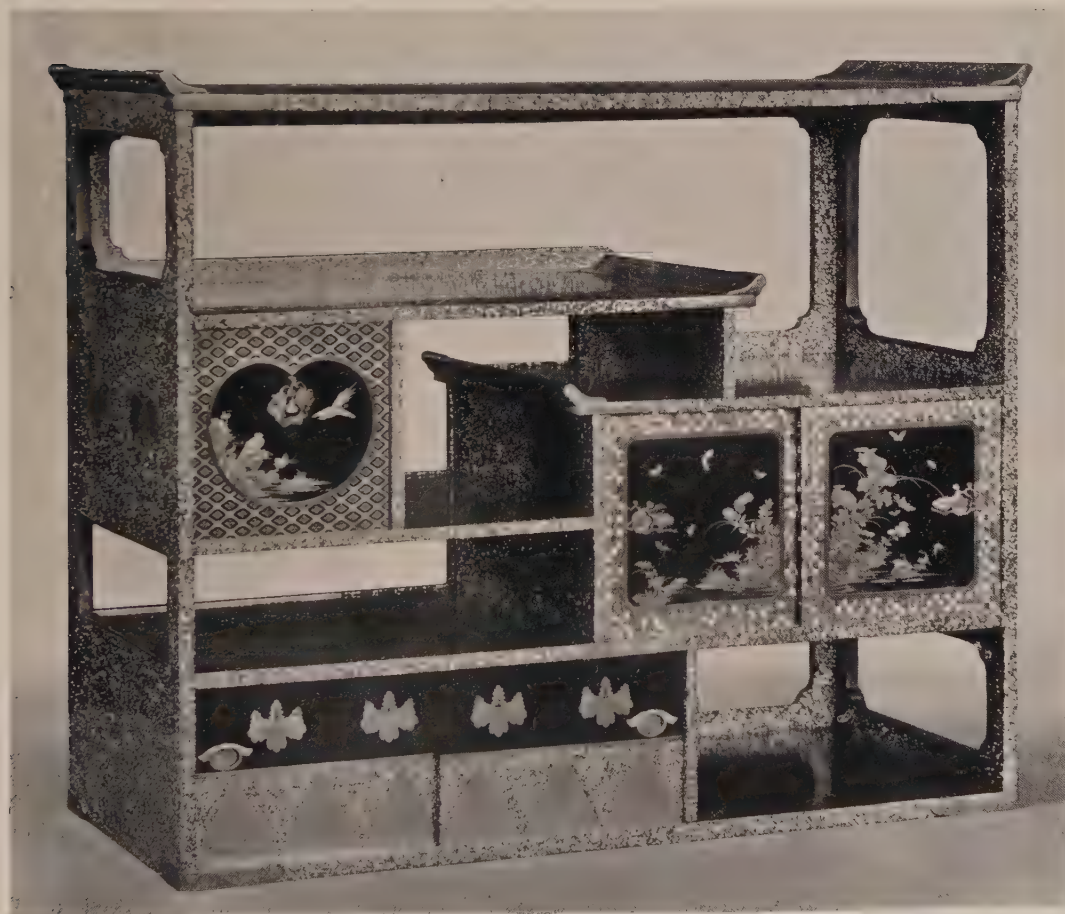
BOX OF BLACK AND GOLD LACQUER. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. JAPANESE.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



LACQUERED CABINET ON CARVED AND SILVERED STAND. 1660-1685. ENGLISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



WRITING DESK LACQUERED AND PAINTED ON LEMON-YELLOW GROUND. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.
ENGLISH. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



LACQUER CABINET WITH GOLD DECORATION. JAPANESE.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



IMPERIAL THRONE OF CH'EN-LUNG. CARVED CINNABAR RED LAC. 1736-1795. CHINESE,
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



BOX OF CINNABAR LACQUER CARVED IN RELIEF. CHINESE
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



COMMUNE LACQUERED IN IMITATION OF CHINESE WORK. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. FRENCH. *Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.*



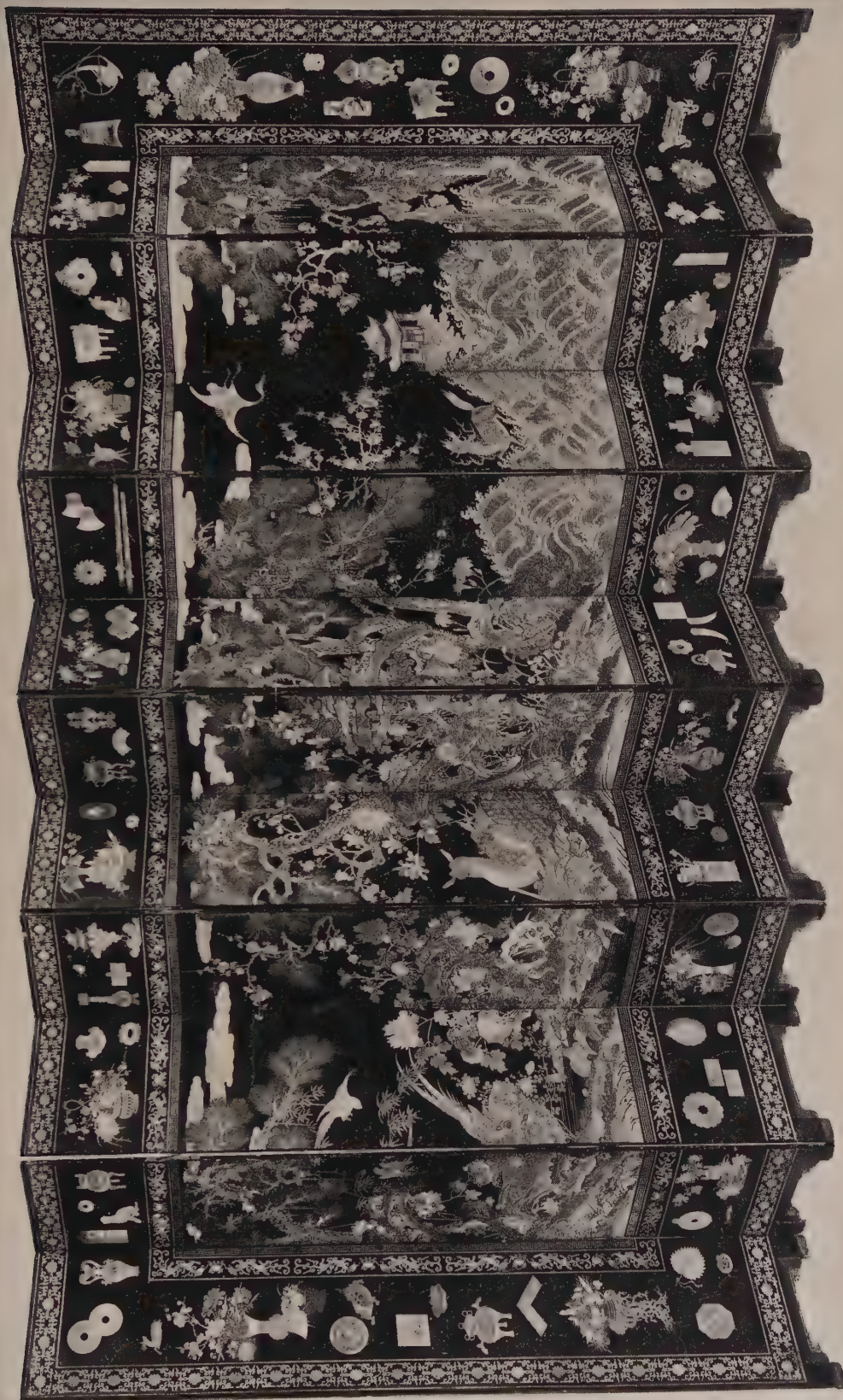
TABLE-TOP PAINTED IN IMITATION OF CHINESE LACQUER. 1725. SOUTH GERMAN. *Bayerisches National Museum, Munich.*



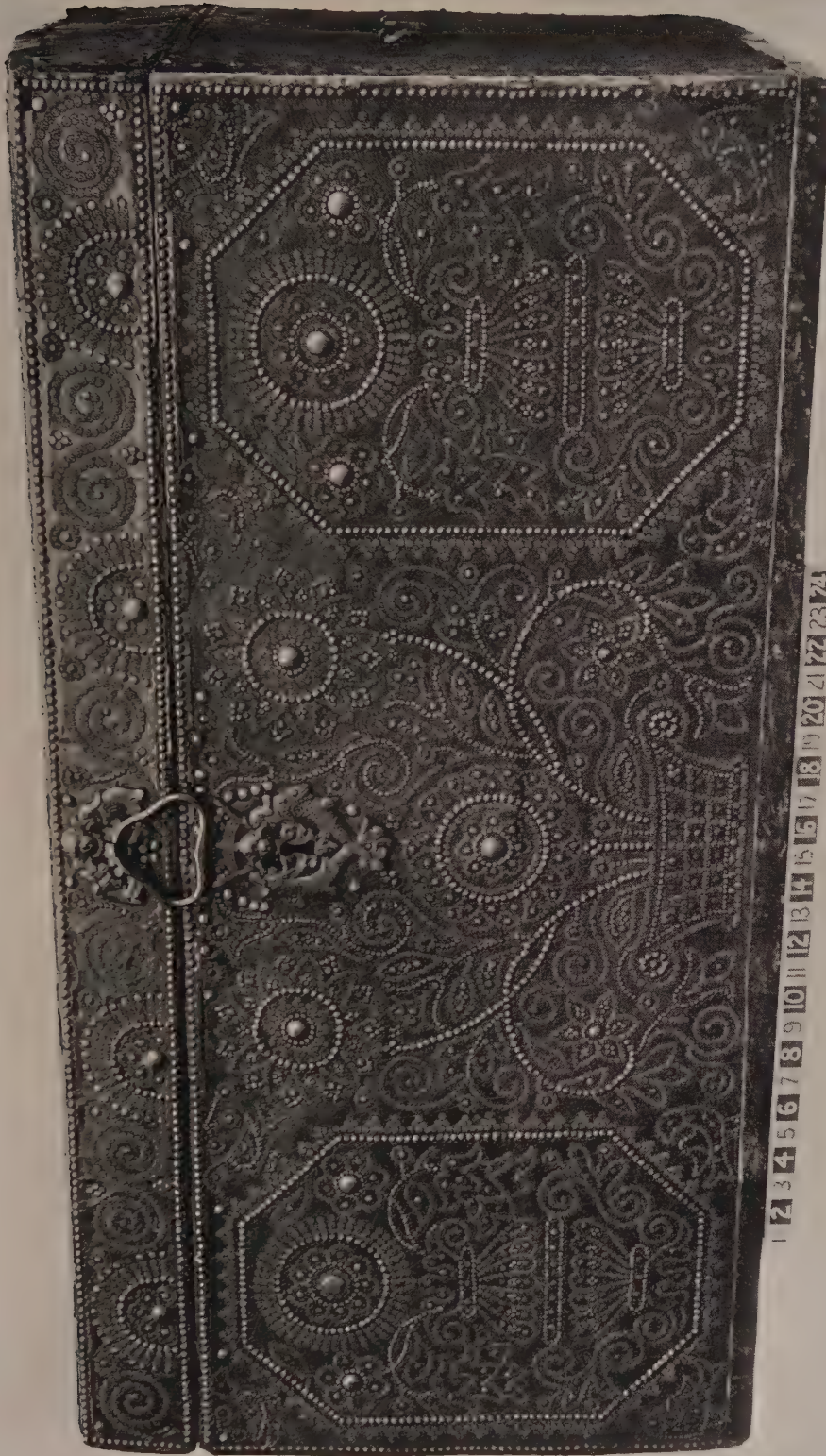
HIGHBOY WITH LACQUER DECORATION. 1700. AMERICAN. *Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*



SECRETAIRE IN SATINWOOD WITH PANELS OF JAPANESE LACQUER. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.
DUTCH. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



LACQUERED SCREEN, DECORATED ON BOTH SIDES WITH INCISED ORNAMENT, PAINTED AND GILT ON A BLACK GROUND. CHINESE.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

TRUNK COVERED WITH LEATHER AND DECORATED WITH BRASS-HEADED NAILS. PERIOD OF LOUIS-QUATORZE. FRENCH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



CHEST COVERED WITH LEATHER AND ORNAMENTED WITH BRASS NAILS, FORMING ON THE LID THE MONOGRAM OF WILLIAM AND MARY. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



CASKET COVERED WITH LEATHER DECORATED WITH FIGURES OF THE VIRGIN AND THE ANGEL OF THE ANNUNCIATION. FIFTEENTH CENTURY. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



SIX-LEAVED SCREEN. LEATHER GILT AND PAINTED IN OIL WITH WATTEAU SUBJECTS. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. ENGLISH. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



SCREEN OF STAMPED, PAINTED AND GILT LEATHER. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



CABINET OF GREEN LACQUER DECORATED WITH PANELS OF EMBROIDERY. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. ENGLISH. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



WOOD CHEST COVERED WITH EMBROIDERY. 1700. DUTCH. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



BEDSTEAD WITH CANOPY AND VALANCE OF RED DAMASK AND DARK GREEN GALON. 1700. ENGLISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



ARM-CHAIR WITH SEAT AND BACK COVERED WITH APPLIQUÉ NEEDLEWORK, YELLOW SILK ON BLACK VELVET. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. SOUTH GERMAN. *Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg.*



THRONE OF NAPOLEON WITH EMBROIDERY IN THE EMPIRE STYLE. FRENCH.
Palace of Fontainebleau, Paris.



SETTEE COVERED WITH AUBUSSON TAPESTRY. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. FRENCH. *Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.*



CYPRESS CHEST WITH INCISED ORNAMENT. ITALIAN. *In the possession of R. Manderson, Esq., Barnstable, England.*



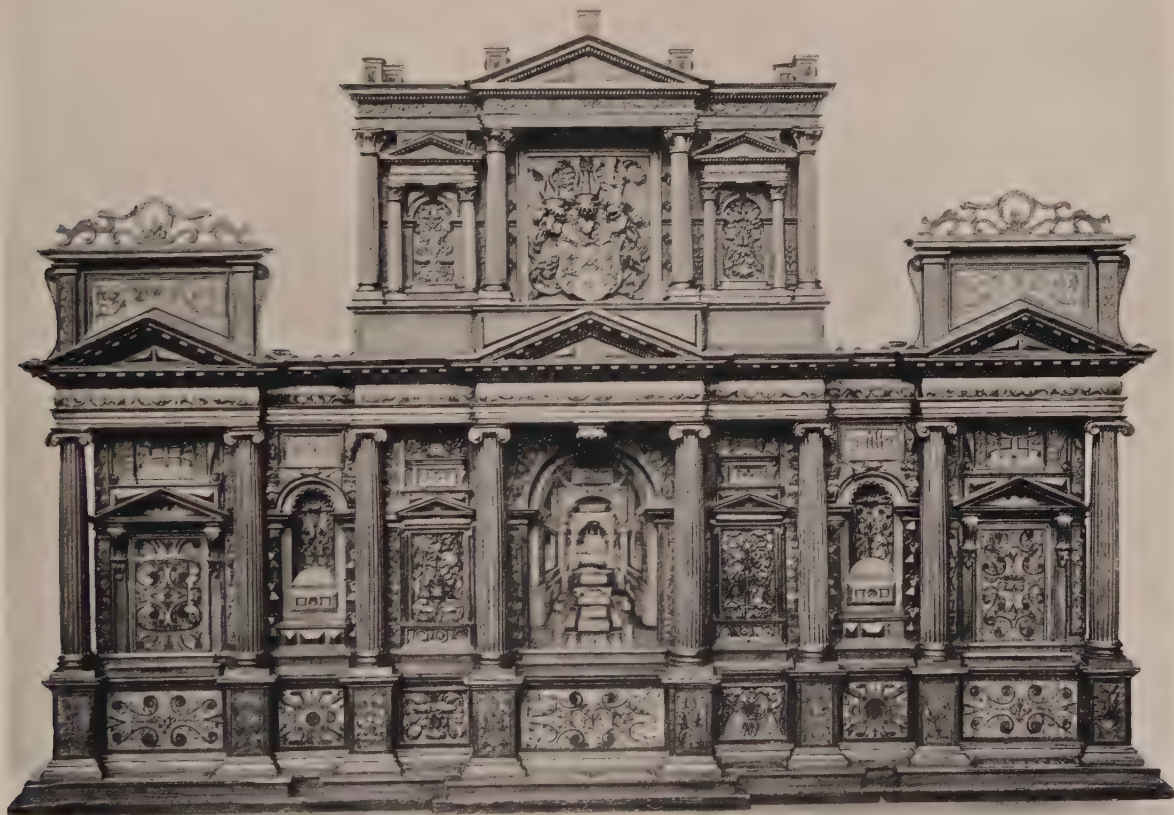
COFFER OF WOOD DECORATED WITH GESSO GILT. ABOUT 1480. FLORENTINE. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



BOOKCASE WITH TRACERIED DOORS. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. ENGLISH.
From the Collection of the late Lord Leverhulme.



CABINET COVERED WITH TORTOISESHELL. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. FLEMISH.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



WRITING DESK DESIGNED TO REPRESENT THE FAÇADE OF A PALACE. SIXTEENTH CENTURY. GERMAN.
Schlossmuseum, Berlin.



CABINET DESIGNED AS THE FAÇADE OF A RENAISSANCE BUILDING. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. AUSTRIAN.
Museum of Art and Industry, Vienna.



EBONY CABINET WITH PANELS OF *PIETRA DURA*. 1630. MADE IN AUGSBURG.
Schlossmuseum, Berlin.



STATE CABINET WITH INLAIS OF COLOURED MARBLES. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. ITALIAN.
Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg.



SECRETAIRE DECORATED WITH PLAQUES OF SÈVRES PORCELAIN. PERIOD OF LOUIS-SEIZE, FRENCH. *Wallace Collection, London.*

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